OVERVIEW AND CURRENT STATUS OF FEMA URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TASK FORCE SYSTEM

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June 2003

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WHAT IS AN URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TASK FORCE?

The national Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System is managed by FEMA within the Department of Homeland Security. Within the system are 28 urban search and rescue task forces, sponsored by local fire departments. They are under contract with FEMA and are made available for response to catastrophic events involving the collapse of heavy steel and concrete construction throughout the United States and its territories. While most local fire departments are capable of affecting search and rescue in light to medium construction collapse, search and rescue demands in heavy construction (heavy steel and concrete) require a particularly high level of expertise coupled with very sophisticated and expensive search, rescue and support equipment.

THE HISTORY

In the late 1980's, following a series of severe earthquakes in California, Mexico and other locations throughout the world, FEMA determined that there was a significant deficiency in our nation's ability to respond to structural collapses in heavy steel and concrete construction. Building on some limited capability that had already been developed in California and with two OFDA sponsored international teams in Fairfax Co., Virginia and Dade Co., Florida. FEMA developed the concept of an urban search and rescue system, to be sponsored by selected local fire departments and supported by the federal government. Initially, 25 fire departments from throughout the United States were selected from competition and the development of a national response system began. Over the course of the next few years, as the result of minimal funding, development was slow but deliberate. The sponsoring agencies at the local level provided personnel, training and varying levels of equipment within local financial constraints.

The emphasis behind the development of the system was rooted in a response mentality directed at natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes. With the advent of the Oklahoma City bombing, the Urban Search and Rescue System found itself at the forefront of the federal government's response to terrorism, as well.

Deployments of federal urban search and rescue assets are initiated in response to an unexpected disaster such as an earthquake or act on terrorism, in anticipation of a disaster such as a hurricane or as a precaution where intelligence has identified an increased threat risk such as the Olympics or Presidential Inaugural. The following is a chronological record of federal task force deployments:

RECORD OF TASK FORCE ACTIVATIONS *

Hurricane Andrew	—	08/1992
Hurricane Iniki	—	09/1992
Typhoon Brian	—	10/1992
Hurricane Emily	—	08/1993
Northridge Earthquake	—	01/1994
Hurricane Emelia	—	07/1994
Oklahoma City	—	04/1995
Hurricane Luis	—	09/1995
Hurricane Marilyn	—	09/1995
Hurricane Opal	—	10/1995
Atlanta Olympic Games	—	07/1996
Hurricane Bertha	—	07/1996
Hurricane Fran	—	09/1996
Humberto Vidal	—	11/1996
Presidential Inaugural	—	01/1997
DeBruce Grain Elevator	—	06/1998
Hurricane Bonnie	—	08/1996
Hurricane Georges	—	09/1998
NATO Summit	—	04/1999
Hurricane Floyd	—	09/1999
UN Millennium	—	09/1999
Worchester fire	—	12/1999
MOBEX 2000	—	11/2000
TOPOFF I	—	05/2000
OPSAIL 2000	—	07/2000
Presidential Inaugural	—	01/2001
WTC / Pentagon	—	09/2001
SLC Olympic Games	—	02/2002
Shuttle Columbia	—	02/2003

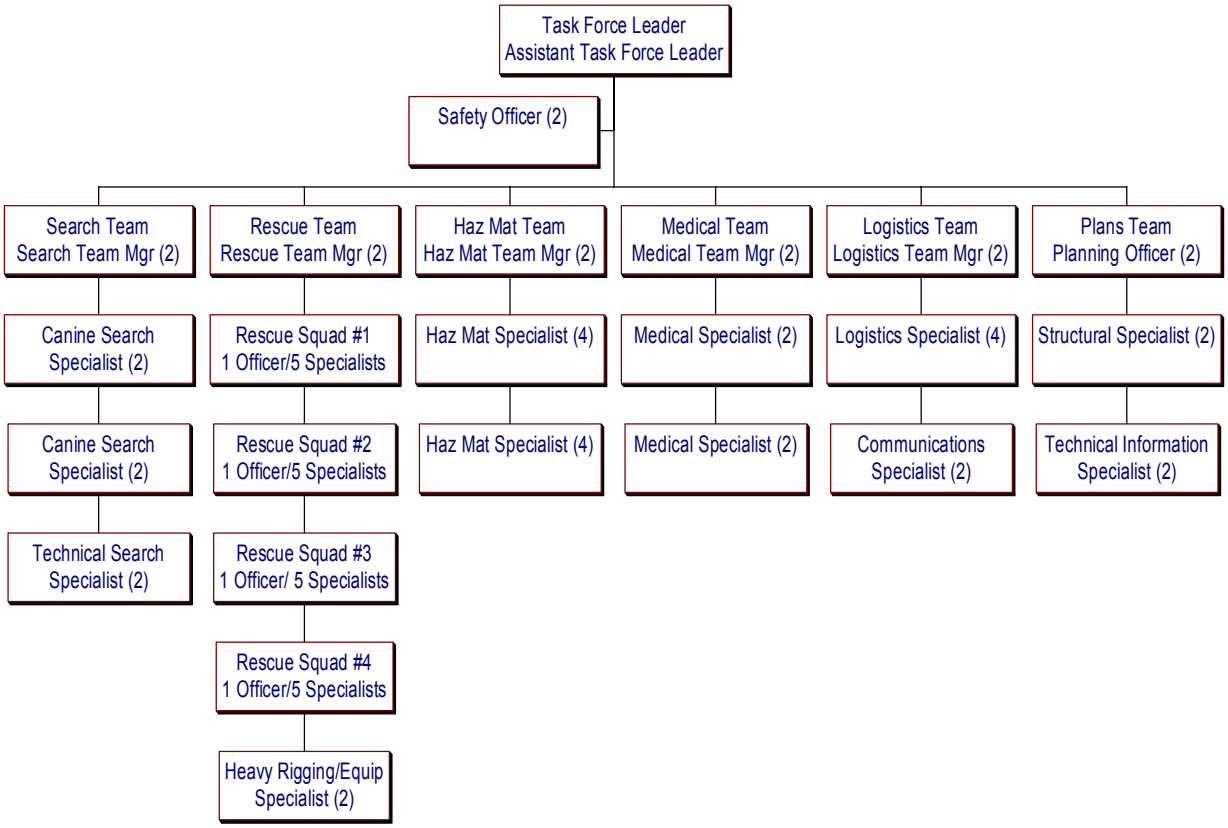
*Most activations involved multiple task forces and IST deployments.

While funding has continued to be minimal, the Federal Urban Search and Rescue Response System has become the most effective of its kind in the world largely due to the overwhelming commitment and dedication of the sponsoring agencies and their personnel who have committed thousands of hours in program development, preparation and delivery of training programs, the development of operating guidelines and equipment research and development. There is a great deal of pride of ownership within the system on the part of the participants in the local fire departments that sponsor FEMA's urban search and rescue program.

TODAY'S TASK FORCES

Upon a federal deployment authorized by a Presidential disaster declaration, an urban search and rescue task force deploys 70 highly trained personnel and four search dogs, certified to federal standards by FEMA. The 70 personnel are rescue specialists, logistics specialists, communications specialists, trauma surgeons, emergency physicians, structural engineers, hazardous materials technicians, nurses, management personnel, safety personnel, heavy equipment operators, technical information specialists and planning specialists. Each of these disciplines requires special backgrounds in training and experience and each discipline also maintains its own training regime. Under agreement with FEMA, each task force must be staffed three deep in each one of the 70 positions to insure around the clock availability of all specialty positions. In other words, each task force maintains roster strength of 210 specialists to insure that at any given time, 70 can be called upon to respond. It should be noted that these personnel are all in place at the local level employed either by the local fire department or in an aligned vocation. They are not on the federal payroll until such time as the President authorizes activation. System wide, there are in excess of 5880 personnel available to the federal government at no direct personnel cost until such time as they are needed. This is an incredible value and a very special and unique partnership that exists between 28 local fire departments and the federal government. Additionally, this partnership combines the quick-strike mentality of local fire departments with the superb support system of the Federal Response Plan.

Below is an organizational chart of a task force during a deployment, which delineates lines of responsibility and control. It reflects duplicity in each of the specialist positions. Task forces are capable of around the clock operations by splitting the task force into two 35-member teams, which work in 12-hour increments.

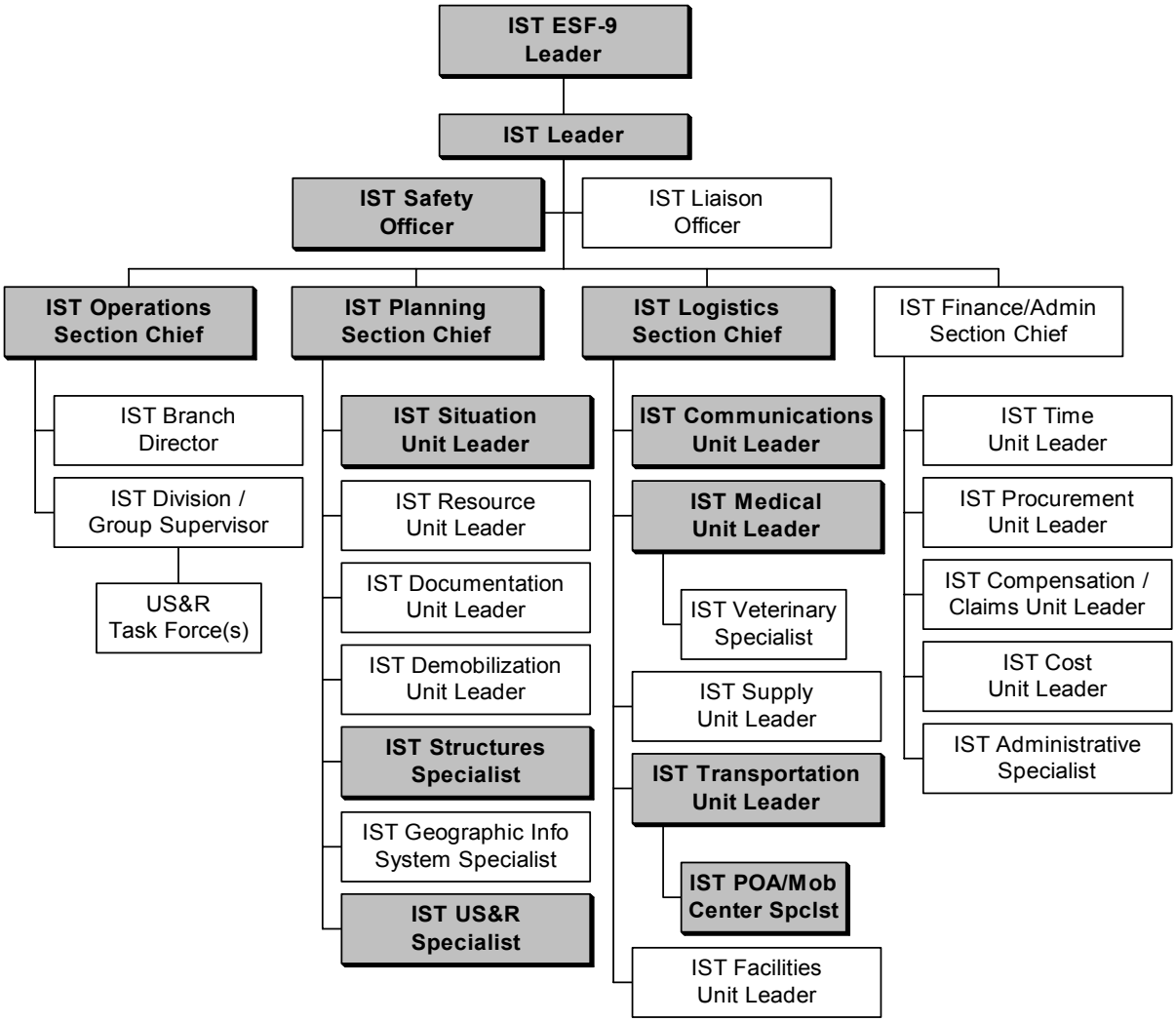


A task force, upon deployment, is equipped to operate in a self-sustaining mode for 72 hours. Following 72 hours, within the Federal Response Plan, the Department of Defense and U.S. Forest Service is tasked with replenishing supplies to the task force. For the first 72 hours, these task forces come, not only with their technical search and rescue equipment, but they come with tents, sleeping bags, food, water, toilet facilities, medicine and all other support supplies and equipment necessary to function in an austere disaster environment while not creating additional support demands on the community that has been impacted by a disaster.

The search and rescue equipment contained within the task force consists of fiber-optic cameras, seismic listening devices, concrete cutting chain saws, heavy lifting capability, a complete communications system, a complete weapons of mass destruction protection unit, a structural engineering unit and a complete emergency medical unit. The equipment cache is now in excess of 100,000 lbs. and requires three tractor-trailers to transport the massive equipment and logistical support cache. The total equipment cache, inclusive of personal equipment and weapons of mass destruction capability (to be explained in more detail later) is $3.25M.

In addition to the 28 task forces, 3 Incident Support Teams (ISTs) are maintained. These are management teams similar to overhead teams deployed by the U.S. Forest Service on major wildfire campaigns. ISTs provide on-site coordination of multiple task forces (there were 8 initially deployed to the World Trade Center and 4 to the Pentagon) and also provide interface and coordination with the local emergency resources and local command structure. They also initiate resupply and special resource needs. ISTs are comprised of personnel from within the task force system specially trained in respective positions.

IST ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE



[Shading denotes IST-A response]

FUNDING

The funding history for such an expansive and critical program has been drastically deficient since its inception. The program has been funded through the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund (Fund Code 6). This is a discretionary fund managed by FEMA Administration. Staff salaries have been funded through FEMA Fund Code 9. The US&R program has never received a line item allocation.

Even in the early years, the equipment cache, alone, was valued at just under $1.5M per task force. Training expenses, maintenance expenses and personnel expenses (Fair Labor Standards Act applies) require the local sponsoring agencies spend significant dollars to meet the short falls created by inadequate federal funding.

Much of the equipment, over the years, has been acquired under the Robert T. Stafford Act during disasters when FEMA was in a position to authorize additional equipment acquisition.

In 1987, two additional task forces were added to the program to expand the system's capability in the central region of the United States and in 1999 an additional central region task force was added, as well. When the task forces were added in 1997, additional funding was provided to quickly bring them to the same capacity as the pre-existing 25 task forces. This funding remained in Fund Code 6 after 1997, bringing annual task force grants to $150,000 per year per task force.

***Funding History**

1990	$422,133	
1991	$2,257,009	
1992	$494,735	
1993	$1,068,514	**[NOTE: All figures do not include mission response costs]**
1994	$1,030,000	
1995	$1,829,694	
1996	$4,069,473	
1997	$3,968,200	
1998	$6,438,000	TFs began receiving $150,000 in grant funding this year
1999	$6,438,000	
2000	$6,438,000	
2001	$10,238,000	(included original $3,800,000 for first WMD TFs)
2002	$6,438,000	
02/03 WMD	$32,400,000	(supplemental — with $740,000 to each TF grant)
2003	$6,400,000	
2003	$60,000,000	(supplemental — with $800,00 to each TF grant)

**Funding inclusive of FEMA US&R system support and task force grants*

It should be noted that, over the years, the fire departments that sponsor these task forces have made significant contributions in staff time, training time, equipment and maintenance, program administration and equipment acquisition. With current and forecasted funding shortfalls, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for local governments to compensate for federal funding shortfalls. Concrete cutting chainsaws valued at $24,000 and fiber optic cameras valued at $22,000 are not acquisitions normally found in routine fire department

operations. Likewise, the overtime required (Federal Fair Labor Standards Act-FSLA) for specialized training is a budgetary impact that is becoming more difficult for local government to absorb.

TASK FORCE GRANT HISTORY

TASK FORCE	Year of Award									
	FY 1991	FY 1992	FY 1993	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000
Phoenix Fire Dept.	$50,000	$10,000	$15,000	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$76,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Los Angeles City Fire Dept.	$85,427	$10,000	$28,656	$0	$25,000	$45,500	$95,750	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Los Angeles County Fire Dept.	$87,554	$10,000	$28,656	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$95,750	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Menlo Park Fire Dept.	$100,000	$10,000	$28,656	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$95,750	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Oakland Fire Dept.	$97,150	$10,000	$28,656	$0	$25,000	$45,500	$95,750	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Orange County Fire Dept.	$100,000	$10,000	$28,656	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$95,750	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Riverside Fire Dept.	$94,674	$10,000	$28,656	$0	$25,000	$45,500	$95,750	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Sacramento Fire Dept.	$49,490	$10,000	$28,656	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$95,750	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
San Diego Fire Dept.	$95,942	$10,000	$28,656	$0	$25,000	$45,500	$95,750	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
West Metro Fire Protect. Dist.	$65,500	$10,000	$15,000	$0	$25,000	$100,000	$127,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Metro-Dade Fire Dept.	$100,000	$10,000	$15,000	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$76,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
City of Miami Fire Dept.	$0	$0	$0	$0	$25,000	$0	$76,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Marion County Fire Dept.	$45,000	$10,000	$15,000	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$76,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Montgomery County Fire Dept.	$92,980	$10,000	$25,000	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$76,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
City of Beverly	$0	$10,000	$45,000	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$115,000	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Boone County Fire Protect. Dist.	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$500,000	$250,000	$83,740	$150,000
City of Lincoln	$34,765	$10,000	$15,000	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$76,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Clark, County	$75,000	$10,000	$15,000	$0	$25,000	$100,000	$115,000	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
State of New Mexico	$45,000	$10,000	$15,000	$0	$25,000	$100,000	$127,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
NYC Fire, Police, EMS	$100,000	$10,000	$25,000	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$76,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Jefferson County, OH	$0	$10,000	$25,000	$0	$25,000	$0	0	$0	$0	$0
Miami Valley Fire/EMS Alliance	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$500,000	$250,000	$83,740	$150,000
State of Pennsylvania	$39,220	$10,000	$15,000	$0	$25,000	$100,000	$127,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Memphis/Shelby County EMA	$97,750	$10,000	$15,000	$0	$25,000	$100,000	$127,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
TEEX	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
State of Utah	$4,000	$10,000	$25,000	$0	$25,000	$100,000	$115,000	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Fairfax County Fire & Rescue	$100,000	$10,000	$25,000	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$76,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Virginia Beach Fire Dept.	$86,351	$10,000	$25,000	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$76,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000
Pierce/King Counties	$100,000	$10,000	$15,000	$0	$25,000	$32,000	$76,500	$80,000	$83,740	$150,000

RECENT FUNDING EFFORTS – FY02 SUPP. & FY03

In response to the tragic events of September 11th, the Urban Search and Rescue System were activated and 8 task forces were immediately deployed to the World Trade Center and 4 were deployed to the Pentagon. After 10 days of operations, all task forces were rotated and replaced by additional task forces. The incredible value and capability of the task forces became well known throughout the country.

The events of September 11th also created a keen awareness of our nation's exposure to terrorist attacks from conventional weapons and within the evolving threat from weapons of mass destruction. In February of 2002, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, H.U.D and Independent Agencies heard testimony which spoke to the value and challenges of the urban search and rescue system and funding deficiencies that had plagued the proper development, maintenance and growth of the system for many years. They also heard concerns of the system's inability to respond to structural collapses in which weapons of mass destruction were present (dirty bomb scenario).

As a result of these efforts, Congress authorized **$32.4M in the FY02 Supplemental Budget** to bring the 28 federal urban search and rescue task forces to a **weapons of mass destruction** level so that they could affect urban search and rescue functions within a contaminated environment. That evolution is presently in process as equipment is being acquired and an accelerated and aggressive training program is underway in all 28 task forces.

Additionally, in **FY03**, Congress authorized **$60M** to address the following additional areas that were also identified in February 2002. It should be pointed out that the initial funding proposal in FY03 **(S2061)** called for **$160M.** Following are budget areas addressed by Congress in recent FY02 Supp, FY03, current status and remaining needs.

- **Completion of Urban Search and Rescue Equipment Caches-** Prior to recent funding increases, some of the 28 task forces had yet to be equipped with the complete equipment cache as specified by FEMA. Depending on the deployment history of the individual task forces (Stafford Act), equipment acquisition has been varied and inequitable. Funding was needed to insure that all 28 task forces were operating with a complete equipment cache as identified by FEMA.

  As a result of the FY03 funding, the annual individual task force grants will allow task forces deficient in equipment to complete their response cache. No further funding in this regard is required.

- **Weapons of Mass Destruction for the Task Forces –** All FEMA US&R task forces must be capable of operating in an environment contaminated by weapons of mass destruction. With the increased threat of terrorism, the potential for an attack using a conventional device wrapped with a WMD material (dirty bomb scenario) is magnified. Task forces must be provided with chemical, biological and nuclear testing and protective equipment, coupled with thorough training, to insure that they can affect search and rescue in a contaminated environment.

As a result of the $32.4M allocated in FY02 Supplemental, an aggressive equipment acquisition and training program is presently underway and should be complete by Sept. 2003. No further initial funding is required however; as will be discussed in a following section on task force grants, maintenance of this equipment cache, training and medical assessment of task force personnel consistent with federal law is very costly and an annual recurring expense.

- **Establish Second Equipment Cache for All Task Forces-** Following the events of September 11, there was some interest in Congress regarding expanding the number of task forces (24 of the 28 task forces were used over a three week period in response to the events of Sept. 11). In response, concern was expressed to Congress from within the system that additional task forces would dilute the ability of the existing 28 to maintain proficiency due to increased lack of use. As an alternative, it was agreed by the system and Congress that the most efficient expansion process, from a financial and expediency standpoint, was to develop a second equipment cache for each of the existing 28 teams. Under the terms of agreement with FEMA, all task forces must be staffed 3-deep in each position to assure constant availability. In other words, each task force deploys 70 personnel and 140 do not deploy. With the addition of a second cache, each task force could field a second task force using personnel already trained and equipped with personal safety gear, thus doubling system capacity from 28 to 56 task forces without doubling the expense.

  A second equipment cache will also allow a task force to maintain its rigid training schedule without rendering its primary response cache out of service. Presently, all task force caches must be kept packaged to military standards for immediate airlift. Training programs cause the packaging system to be broken down, slowing a response to a disaster. Additionally, some task forces located in major cities, since September 11, are more reluctant to allow their task force to leave their community as their task force might be needed there in the event of a local terrorist attack. The second cache would insure availability of all task forces, regardless of local threat levels or perceptions.

  Funding in FY03 will allow partial funding (approximately 30%) of the second US&R caches. Below are costing calculations for the second cache. Note, as agreed to with Congress, that there is no additional costing for personal protective equipment as existing task force personnel already have it assigned. It should also be noted, as also agreed, there is no allowance for additional training or administrative expense for additional personnel as there would be if additional teams were added. The **cost avoidance** to the federal government is estimated at **$49M**.

  An additional $50M is needed to bring the second equipment cache in each task force up to the required level to insure duplicity in the system and achieve the depth of response initially desired by Congress.

2003 US&R Equipment Cache List Component Costs (in final approval process)

▪ Rescue Component	$355,156
▪ Medical Component	$216,937
▪ Technical Component	$153,233
▪ Communications Component	$546,997
▪ Logistics Component	$1,593,166
▪ Planning Component	$518
▪ WMD Component	$550,000
CACHE TOTAL	**$2,021,719**

As a result of duplicate cache acquisition, the system will double in capacity without incurring the following expenses:

▪ Personal Gear	$844,288
▪ Training (initial) & Admin	$500,000
▪ Transportation	$400,000
TOTAL SAVINGS	**$1,744288 X 28 = $48,840,064**

- **Annual Task Force Grants-** Since FY00 and until FY02 and FY03, task forces have been receiving $150,000 annually from FEMA to operate, maintain and train these critical teams. In years prior to FY00, funding was much less. This is very inadequate. Current projections, based on local requirements, indicate that the task forces, to operate effectively, provide proper training and management, replace and maintain aging and worn equipment, take advantage of new technology, properly warehouse the equipment cache, develop effective training environments and conduct mobilization exercises and drills is $1.3M.

  Much of the search, rescue and support equipment in the task force cache is used in highly demanding environments and/or has shelf lives. It is estimated that 10% of the cache warrants replacement each year and yet, with annual grants of $150,000, this has been unachievable. Additionally, task forces have not been in a position to take advantage of evolving technology and have been forced to operate with radio and computer technology over 12 years old.

Program staffing	—	$225,000	[75% funding for TF Program Manager and Cache Manager — $150,000 each X 2 = $300,000 X 0.75 = $225,000]
Program management	—	$150,000	
Program training	—	$200,000	
Equipment acquisition	—	$200,000	
Storage/maintenance	—	$300,000	
Medical screening/physicals	—	$200,000	
TOTAL		$1,275,000	

  Inclusive within these calculations are accommodations to support the weapons of mass destruction capability. With the expansion of capability to include weapons of mass destruction operational capability, the annual operating costs have increased significantly. Over $550,000 worth of highly specialized WMD equipment is being

added to each task force. Much of the environmental monitoring and testing equipment requires periodic calibration, chem-bio suits require testing and periodic replacement, training expenses are extremely high as chem-bio suits in some cases can not be reused and many of the pharmaceuticals must be periodically replaced. Additionally, OSHA requires that all personnel must receive extensive annual medical exams. It is estimated that maintenance and support for the WMD component, alone, is $187,000 annually per task force.

The FY03 budget, as presently programmed, will provide annual grants of $800,000 for each task force. While a significant improvement over the $150,000 of the past, the grants will continue to fall short of true funding requirements. An annual allocation of $35M for task force grant is required to properly support these units.

- **Ground Transportation-** Within the federal response plan, Department of Defense airlift assets have historically transported the federal government's urban search and rescue task forces to the site of a catastrophic event. In recent deployments, specifically the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, it was determined that in many instances, particularly with the geographic spread of the task forces, if task forces were provided with dependable and appropriate ground transportation assets, task forces could be pre-loaded and could respond by road, in most cases, quicker (and cheaper) than they could respond by air. This is also essential due to the increasing unavailability of military airlift assets (airlift requires 3-4 military C-130s or C-141s) as a result of military downsizing and ongoing military activities overseas.

  Funding provided in FY03 will insure that all 28 task forces will have solid ground transportation assets readily available as opposed to relying on borrowed, leased or surplus trucks upon activation. No further funding, in this regard, is required however; increased annual task force grants would provide maintenance, insurance, etc.

- **Urban Search and Rescue System Support -** The FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Division is tasked with support and coordination of the response system. Funding allocated from FY03 ($60M), Fund Code 6 and Fund Code 9 within FEMA's annual budget is $10M. With the additional funding provided in FY03, support has been enhanced (for one year) however; additional staff is needed to insure timely responsiveness to task force needs and system enhancement. To adequately support the system, an annual allocation of $10.5M is required.

- **International Response –** As we move to enhance our homeland security, the vulnerability of our facilities abroad and those of our allies will increase. Presently, two of the 28 task forces are equipped and maintain agreements with the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance within the State Department to respond outside the United States. We do not believe this is adequate and steps should be taken to facilitate the overseas deployment of any of the task forces should they be needed on foreign soil.

This will involve the acquisition of additional logistical supplies, provision of passport acquisition, immunizations and an adjustment in the State Department's philosophy regarding the need for additional teams for international deployment.

This issue was addressed before the Senate in February 2002 however; no funding was provided within the FY03 package due to limited funding and domestic priorities. The cost of this system enhancement is an initial capital allocation of $5M to acquire additional logistical support items and an annual operating allocation of $8.4M to maintain international immunizations, passports, etc.

FUNDING SUMMARY - NEED

Domestic Response

One Time Expenditure – For the completion of second equipment caches to be used for domestic response: **$50M**

Annual Recurring Expense – For annual task force grants and System Support (FEMA) for domestic response: **$45.5M**

International Response*

One Time Expenditure – For upgrade of response caches for international response: **$5M**

Annual Recurring Expense – For task force and personnel expenses: **$8.4M**

*This may be a State Department (OFDA) issue.

PROPOSED FY04 FUNDING (OMB)

This year, in the FY04 budget process, OMB has sent forward a budget recommendation for the Urban Search and Rescue Program of $6.4M to Congress. This translates into annual grants to the task forces of, again, $150,000 per year per task force and no improvement in the support offered from FEMA Headquarters. While the $60M allocation in FY03 is providing task forces with badly needed enhancements to the program, original budget language contained in S2061, sponsored by Senator Christopher Bond of Missouri, was for $160M. Clearly, we continue to fall short of our required funding levels to maintain and enhance the system.

LEGISLATIVE NEEDS

National Urban Search & Rescue Response System Act of 2003: Protecting the Nation's Urban Search & Rescue Personnel

Background

In 1989, FEMA created the National Urban Search & Rescue Response System[1] (National System) to provide assistance in the event of a Presidential Declaration of Disaster or Emergency. This assistance includes locating, extracting and providing on-site medical treatment to victims trapped in collapsed structures.

The National System relies on the expertise of local fire department and emergency response personnel (System Members), who are trained and organized into Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) "Task Forces." Upon activation by the Department of Homeland Security, System Members perform search and rescue operations, such as collapsed structure search and rescue operations, incident management, and other emergency operational activities. Because the National System utilizes local emergency personnel employed by local governments for relatively short-term assignments, System Members serve as temporary federal resources.

A fundamental principle of the National System is that the local fire department and emergency personnel are concurrently employed by DHS and the Task Force sponsor, which prevents the workers from suffering a break in their service to their usual employer when acting as temporary federal resources. The local fire department and emergency personnel receive pay and benefits from their usual employers, and their usual employer is then reimbursed by DHS for their time.

The Problem

The creation of the National System, while directed by Congress in the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1989, was never specifically authorized by either that Act, or FEMA's authorizing statute, the Stafford Act. As a result, important protections – primarily workers' compensation and tort and professional liability coverage – remain ambiguous.[2] Without these protections, System Members, and the State and local governments who sponsor their federal service, could face crushing financial liability in the event of a line-of-duty injury or death, or a lawsuit. **These workers, called upon to respond immediately to disasters and emergencies in communities across the country, could find themselves without Federal workers' compensation and tort liability protections.**

The Solution

The National Urban Search & Rescue Response System Act of 2003 (proposed)

By specifically authorizing and describing the National System by amending the Stafford Act, the proposed bill would ensure that System Members are afforded federal workers' compensation and tort liability protections, and sponsors of US&R Task Forces are shielded from crushing financial liability.

[1] FEMA established the National System under authorities provided by the Stafford Act, and this authority has now been transferred to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

[2] Specifically, coverage under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, 5 U.S.C.§§ 8101 *et seq.* ("FECA") and the Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C.§§ 2671 *et seq.*